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EDUCATIONAL USES OF HYPNOTISM.

BY DR. R. OSGOOD MASON.

It can no longer be doubted by those who are conversant with the subject that hypnotism is a fact and has come to stay. Its phenomena are too abundant and too easily observed; it has already proved of too great utility, and too many well-known scientific men have pronounced in its favor and are busy working out its numerous problems, to admit of its experiencing any serious decline or permanent retrograde movement.

In its domain two immense fields of investigation are already open and are assiduously cultivated: one is the field of therapeutics—the amelioration and cure of diseased conditions; the other is the field of psychology—the relation which hypnotism bears to mental action and the clues which it gives to strange and important phenomena which have long been misunderstood or else altogether ignored. In both of these fields much good work has already been done, while much still remains to be accomplished. But a third field is beginning to be opened up—still broader, and one which may yet prove of greater interest and utility than either of the others; it is the educational field—the influence which may be exerted by hypnotism upon the development and improvement of mind. How far it may be applicable to the development of the normal intellect it is not necessary now to inquire—the needs in that direction are not imperative; but when one views the number of children brought into the world with imperfect mental organizations and vicious tendencies, and sees how little impression in general is made upon them by the ordinary and even the special processes of education, it is of interest to inquire if there are no other methods by which these deficiencies may in a measure be remedied and the vicious tendencies eradicated.

Enough is already known of hypnotism generally to warrant us in looking with confidence in that direction for efficient and practical help ; and experiment has shown that our expectations are not likely to be disappointed. What are the facts and methods now ready for inspection ?

Both of the important fields with which we are already acquainted, the therapeutic and psychic, present obvious analogies to the comparatively new one now under consideration. When hypnotism, under the name of animal magnetism, was brought to light a hundred years ago, the main feature presented was its curative influence upon disease; and, while its curious psychological phenomena were studiously noted, the main object of those who so energetically, and in the face of ignorant and discourteous opposition, pursued its study during the first half-century was to find the best methods of making it practically useful as a therapeutic agent. All these early experimenters produced the hypnotic condition by means of passes and manipulations, and had no doubt but that some influence or virtue passed from the operator to the subject, by which he was put to sleep and by which also curative effects were produced.

Half a century later, midway in the history of the subject, Braid began to produce hypnotic effects by other means than those used by the early mesmerists, and to throw doubt upon the theory of a magnetic influence ; and, while he introduced a new name, new procedures, and, to a greater extent, the psychic element, he did not increase the practical curative effects which had hitherto been the main object of those who devoted themselves to the study and practice of the new art. Under the influence of Liébeault, Charcot, and Bernheim, the psychic element was still further recognized and emphasized, and suggestion was made the prominent feature in treatment ; but it was still the therapeutic value of hypnotism which constituted the leading element and motive in its study, and it was in hospitals and the private practice of physicians that it was chiefly studied and made use of. So from its first appearance to the present time its therapeutic value has been recognized, and has constituted one of its leading features. Only second to this have been the psychic phenomena which have accompanied the hypnotic condition, and which have come to excite more and more interest and to assume greater and greater importance.

Of these psychic phenomena, that which most nearly concerns our present purpose is the increased power of suggestion, as shown by the facility with which the hypnotized subject may be influenced, and the wonderful effect, physical, mental, and moral, which suggestion properly applied in the hypnotic condition is able to produce.

As examples of the physical effects which it is possible to produce by suggestion, the following may be mentioned : The rate of the pulse may be increased or diminished ; contraction or relaxation of certain muscles may be produced ; paralysis of a specified limb may be caused, or it may be cured when it already exists ; an ordinary postage stamp applied to the skin may produce a blister ; a piece of cold metal, as, for instance, a key, applied to the skin, may produce a raised figure of the same shape, red from congestion of the capillary vessels, or it may be made to appear as a blister ; red or bleeding points upon the hands or feet or side may be produced, all by suggestion alone or a touch accompanied by suggestion. Such are some of the physical effects which may in some specially susceptible patients be produced by suggestion while in the hypnotic condition.

If such physical effects are possible, it may easily be believed that mental and moral effects may also be induced—and such is the fact. Here, then, we come directly upon the boundaries of our present subject, namely, the educational element in hypnotism ; for, if mental and moral effects in the direction of improvement can be produced and made permanent, we have taken a long step in a true educational process.

To what extent has this been actually accomplished ?

A very marked and, it must also be said, most unusual case is reported in the *Annales Medico-Psychologiques*, and has been verified and summarized by Mr. F. W. H. Myers, Secretary of the Society for Psychical Research.

Still further condensed, it is as follows. In the summer of 1884 there was at the Salpêtrière a young woman of a deplorable type—a criminal lunatic, filthy in habits and violent in demeanor, and with a life-long history of impurity and theft. M. Auguste Voisin, one of the physicians of the hospital staff, undertook to hypnotize her at a time when she could be kept quiet only by the strait-jacket and the continuous cold douche to the head. She would not look at the operator, but raved and spat at him.

M. Voisin, however, kept his face close to hers and followed her eyes wherever she moved them. In ten minutes she was asleep, and in five minutes more she passed into the sleep-waking or somnambulant state and began to talk incoherently. This treatment being repeated on many successive days, she gradually became sane when in the hypnotic condition, though she still raved when awake.

At length she came to obey in her waking hours commands impressed upon her in her trance—trivial matters, such as to sweep her room—then suggestions involving marked changes in her behavior; finally in the hypnotic state she voluntarily expressed regret for her past life, and of her own accord made good resolutions for the future which she carried out when awake; and the improvement in her conduct and character was permanent. Two years later M. Voisin wrote that she was a nurse in a Paris hospital and that her conduct was irreproachable.

This is an unusual but by no means a unique case. M. Voisin has reported others equally striking; and M. Dufour, medical director of another asylum, has also found hypnotism “able to render important service in the treatment of mental disease,” and has adopted it as a regular and important factor in its cure.

I mention these cases not as being the most practical in character, but as showing the power for good of hypnotic treatment in some cases of a most unpromising class. The class to which I would especially call attention is the one embracing mental deficiencies, evil habits, and vicious tendencies, exhibited especially in childhood and youth. Under the head of mental deficiencies may be mentioned dullness of perception, imperfect power of attention, deficient memory, and general inaptitude for acquiring knowledge; under evil habits may be mentioned personal uncleanness, biting the nails, idleness, cowardice, the tobacco, opium, or alcohol habit; and under vicious tendencies, lying, unconscious misrepresentation, kleptomania, needless cruelty, and moral perversity.

At the Second International Congress of Experimental Psychology, held in London in 1892, a paper was read by Dr. Bérillon, editor of the *Revue de l'Hypnotisme*, entitled “The Application of Hypnotic Suggestion to Education.” Under his observation hypnotism and suggestion had been successfully utilized in the treatment of more than 250 children with refer-

ence to the following diseases and tendencies : nervous insomnia, night terror, somnambulism, kleptomania, stammering, inveterate idleness, uncleanness, cowardice, biting the nails, and moral perversity. He stated further that facts relative to the successful treatment of these diseases by suggestion had been verified by a great number of observers and authors, and that such facts constituted the practical side of psychology. Suggestion made it possible to submit the development of the various intellectual faculties of the child to a careful analysis, and thus to facilitate the process of education.

A most important fact, and one which renders the use of suggestion of much wider application than has usually been thought possible, is, that in order to accomplish the proposed object it is not necessary that the deep hypnotic sleep should be produced. Many persons consulting a physician for hypnotic treatment suppose it necessary that they should go into the deep trance and pass through all the wonderful stages and experiences which occasionally accompany this condition ; associated with this supposition is also the idea that some miraculous change or therapeutic effect is to be suddenly produced ; and, while it is true that such sudden and seemingly miraculous effects are sometimes produced, yet in the aggregate ten times more good is accomplished by the slower process of repeated suggestion upon cases in which the hypnotic condition is only partially secured, and in which neither absolute unconsciousness nor absolute anæsthesia accompanies the processes employed ; and this is the use of hypnotic suggestion to which I would especially apply the term *educational*.

What part, then, does hypnotism bear in this matter, and how can its use be made an adjuvant to education ?

In the study of the more unusual phenomena connected with mental action, some interesting facts have been discovered ; and one of these facts is this, that the personality which we ordinarily see in activity, that which observes, talks, is intensely occupied about money, society, office, food, and general comfort, that personality by which we are usually known, may not after all be the only one which goes to make up the individual, but that another personality may sometimes make its appearance. Some persons, as, for instance, those known as somnambulists, while in a condition apparently of ordinary sleep, arise from their beds, walk, talk, play an instrument, write sermons and prepare argu-

ments, then return to bed, sleep on as usual, awake at the proper time and know nothing of what has transpired during their somnambulism. These persons are utterly unconscious of what has transpired, nevertheless they often do things much better than when awake, and even things which they could not accomplish at all in their ordinary condition. Still further, although in their waking condition they are quite unconscious of what has transpired during their somnambulism, yet when a similar condition occurs upon a subsequent night, all the events which occurred on the former occasion are perfectly remembered and talked about, so that the several occasions upon which this somnambulatory condition has occurred and the events which transpired in them are all linked together, forming one well-defined chain of memories and a personality perfectly distinct from the usual one.

When a somnambulist is put into the hypnotic condition and then talks, it is found that the speaker is that same personality which spoke and acted during the time of ordinary somnambulism, showing that the personality which acts during ordinary somnambulism and the personality brought into action by hypnotism are the same. This new personality has of late become a subject of great interest and persistent study. Not only does it come into activity in ordinary somnambulism and in the hypnotic condition, but also in dreams, in reverie, in abstraction, and sometimes apparently in a normal passive condition. This second personality has been named the sub-conscious or subliminal self, and it possesses many curious faculties which we have not time to consider here; but, whatever this subliminal self may be, we have in hypnotism the means of experimentally reaching and influencing it; and this is where the great power of suggestion appears and is utilized.

Suppose, then, the physician has a patient in the deep hypnotic sleep; the patient hears nothing, perhaps feels nothing. The physician then says to him: "When you awake you will take the book which lies on the table, open it at the forty-third page and read four lines at the top of the page." He is then awakened. He has heard nothing; but his subliminal self, which has been made accessible by hypnotism, has heard and influences him to carry out the suggestion. He goes to the table and takes up the book, finds the forty-third page and he reads the four lines at the top of the page; he has no thought but that he is doing it all of his

own accord ; and so he is—he is obeying the impulse of his own subliminal self.

Suppose the patient to be a boy with the cigarette habit, and the physician had suggested as follows : “ When you awake you will no longer desire to smoke. On the contrary, the very thought of it will be disagreeable to you, and you will avoid it altogether.” He awakes, he knows nothing of what has transpired, but he finds he has no longer the desire to smoke, and consequently he ceases the practice.

Suppose, on the contrary, this had been the suggestion : “ You know your parents are greatly troubled and anxious about your smoking ; you are too young ; it will be harmful to you. When you awake this idea will be constantly before you, and it will so influence your action that in compliance with the wishes of your parents, and because you will be convinced of its harmful effects, you will at once leave off the habit.” And so he does.

But perhaps only one in ten of those applying for treatment are good hypnotic subjects and can be influenced in this comparatively easy manner. What of the other nine—can they have no assistance ? On the contrary, nearly every one of them can be brought into the hypnotic condition to a greater or less degree—usually into a condition of reverie or light sleep, in which the usual self is passive and the subliminal self may be more or less perfectly reached and influenced. These are the more difficult cases—less striking and less satisfactory to both patient and physician ; nevertheless, they are cases in which perseverance can accomplish a great deal, and is almost sure of achieving success.

Putting the patient into the best hypnotic condition possible, the suggestions are quietly and earnestly made and repeated ; he is then aroused ; he has been quieted and peculiarly rested ; he thinks he has heard what has been said to him, but very likely he is unable to repeat it. The treatment is repeated at short intervals for a few days or weeks, and all concerned are gratified to find the desired result secured. It is in this manner, by frequent repetition, that the educational effect of hypnotic suggestion is obtained, whether in the deep sleep or light hypnotic condition. An imperfect memory to be stimulated, a kleptomaniac to be restrained, or a case of habitual lying to be influenced, and a mental force and moral sentiment induced, these are matters requiring tact, labor, and patience ; but much can be accomplished.

An intellectual perception, and a moral sentiment, are at length established where precept and punishment under ordinary conditions had proved of no avail.

Numerous examples could be cited, not only of these moral deformities and deficiencies remedied, but also in the line of ordinary education, where there was absolute inability to concentrate the mind upon the given task, or where every idea regarding it vanished, leaving the mind a blank, the moment the pupil stood up in the class-room, or where memory entirely failed to retain the acquired lesson ; or, still again, where even in adults the ability to spell correctly or use grammatical language was wanting ; and where a few hypnotic treatments by suggestion have given the power to concentrate the mind upon study—to retain and express clearly what was learned—and where, by the same means, a good degree of facility in spelling and the correct use of language has been acquired.

Such is a mere hint of the possibilities connected with the use of hypnotic suggestion as an element in education. My own experience in many interesting cases, as well as the recorded observation of others, has led me to believe that these possibilities have yet only begun to be appreciated or their value and wide range of application suspected, and that the next half century will see newer, truer, more harmonious as well as more scientific views regarding hypnotism itself among those who make it a study ; that the prejudice on the part of the public, which is now a bar to its usefulness, will disappear ; and that new uses, therapeutic, psychic, and educational, will be discovered, which will place it among the most highly prized agents for good in use among intelligent well-wishers of humanity.

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